

EXHIBIT FF

Plaintiff's Fragmented Literal Similarity Examples (Pl.'s Mem. at 28-29)

[content Plaintiff omitted with ellipses in **bold red**]

<p>Freeman Ex. 14 p. 236: He claimed he wasn't a werewolf but could shift into a wolf. It seemed like a bit of a technicality to me but apparently it was the monster distinction that made all the difference to him.</p>	<p>Crave p. 321: "Well, if you're going to get technical, they're wolf shifters really, more than werewolves."</p>
<p>Freeman Ex. 17 p. 105: A long moment of intense silence descends between us, his fingers locked around my wrist and our eyes locked with one another.</p>	<p>Covet p. 126: An awkward silence descends between us, and I honestly don't know what to say to him.</p>
<p>Freeman Ex. 17 p. 57: A shiver skitters down my spine.</p>	<p>Covet p. 448: I'm about to decide this kid's not so bad—and then our gazes collide, and a shiver of fear skitters down my spine.</p>
<p>Freeman Ex. 19 p. 455: Desperately, I tried to think of an out to save Rachel's life. "Please," I cried. "She-they're all my best friends! I couldn't bear it if any of them ... died." He patted my hand. "Hmm. We can't have that, now can we? As important as you are to me ... What are you willing to barter if I agree to let them live?" "I-I can't think of anything I have that you'd want." He just looked at me, saying nothing. I shook my head, my mind scrambling for an idea. What would an incubus-a soul sucker-consider fair trade for my friends' lives? I could think of only one thing and it was a promise I didn't want to make. But a heroine would do it. And I was good-so now was my chance to prove it. "Let's make a deal." I said it confidently.</p>	<p>Court pp. 630-631: The crowd boos and jeers and I rack my brain, trying to figure out the perfect thing to say next. "What I actually want is protection for my friends and myself. Promise me you and your army won't harm or kill us, ever, and I'll tell you everything the Crone told me about this little altar situation you have going on." "You're really going to waste this opportunity on my worthless sons and a couple of mangy strays?" "Yes," I say simply, "I am." Because if I say any more, he'll see just how angry I am that he referred to my friends like that. Who the hell is he to call my friends anything? "If that's what you want," he says, walking forward with a slow, measured step. "Let's make a deal."</p>
<p>Freeman Ex. 18 p. 337: I took a slow breath as I tried to do the math in my head. "That means he's-he's like—"</p>	<p>Court pp. 368-369: "So then how could she be a thousand years old and still look sixteen?" I ask.</p>

<p>“Over a thousand years old, give or take a few years.</p>	<p>Hudson rubs a hand over the stubble on his jaw before answering, “At a guess, I would say our shite father kept her locked in a bloody crypt for most of her life.”</p> <p>I gasp, horrified at the very idea of some poor child being locked in a crypt for what must have felt like eternity—even if that child is Isadora. “But—but you said the elixir stops working over time, right?”</p> <p>He scoots up the bed until he’s laying down next to me. I start to think I’m making progress until he crosses his arms over his chest, being careful to keep at least a foot between us even now.</p> <p>“There are stories of vampires being kept under for hundreds of years, actually.” His voice is thoughtful, his eyes far away. “It’s true the elixir stops working the more often you use it, but if he didn’t awaken her at all, I guess in theory she would have just stayed in stasis. We don’t age in stasis.”</p> <p>It still sounds horrible, but then that’s the point, isn’t it? My poor mate has been tortured pretty much his entire life. “What was the whole process called again?” I coax him to continue. “Descending?”</p> <p>“Descent,” he corrects. “When we turn five, there’s a huge celebration. That’s when we reach the Age of Descent. I still remember the festival my father threw for me. At the time, I couldn’t imagine there being a bigger celebration anywhere, ever.”</p> <p>His breathing is even now, steady. I have a million questions, but I don’t ask them. I know there is a story here, and I think Hudson wants to tell me. I just have to be patient, let him find his own way to it.</p> <p>“Father had the cooks slaughter fifty pigs for the festival and make about a thousand different pies. The castle was filled with so many people that it was overflowing, and they were all dressed in their finest gowns and waistcoats. I climbed to the tallest tower at one point, just to count the number of carriages</p>
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	<p>that arrived.” He chuckles. “Of course, what I was really counting were the number of presents I would receive that day, as every guest brought one.”</p> <p>I smile, trying to imagine Hudson as a small child—innocent and maybe even happy. “Did you wear your hair in a pompadour even back then?” I tease.</p> <p>He snort laughs. “Hardly. I know it’s shocking, but I was difficult in my early years.”</p> <p>“So shocking,” I agree.</p> <p>He reaches up and tugs thoughtlessly at a few of the locks resting on his forehead. I don’t even think he realizes what he’s doing. “My hair was always a bit long and wild back then.”</p> <p>“Seriously?” I flip onto my side and rest my head on my hand as I grin at him. “If you’ve been keeping a portrait from me of you looking like a young Jason Momoa, I will never forgive you.”</p> <p>He’s smiling when he rolls to face me. “Is this when you ask me to get into some kinky role-playing? I warn you, I’d make a terrible Aquaman.”</p> <p>Thinking of his long, lean body in Aquaman’s wet suit makes me want to disagree. “Later. Definitely later,” I tease. “So you were five when? Like the 1800s?”</p> <p>I know both he and Jaxon have mentioned being hundreds of years old at times, but I’ve never thought of either of them as more than eighteen or nineteen. At least not until I start to do the math in my head... “Oh my God, am I, like, your seven thousandth girlfriend?”</p>
<p>Freeman Ex. 15 p. 97:</p> <p>Meret and I walk for what feels like a mile until we come to a large set of golden doubledoors inscribed with hieroglyphs.</p>	<p><i>Covet</i> pp. 567:</p> <p>Either way, we walk down a really, really, really long corridor until we get to a pair of gold double doors.</p>
<p>Freeman Ex. 19 pp. 495-508:</p> <p>“The mirror is a portal between our worlds, child. You may cross the realms safely, I assure you.” Our fingers linked, hand</p>	<p><i>Covet</i> pp. 435-438:</p> <p>I can’t wrap my head around it as they walk us into the forest—and straight into a portal that Cyrus obviously had opened for just</p>

in hand, I stepped toward her and walked easily through the mirror that wasn't really a mirror at all, the echo of Lily's anguished screams ringing in my ears.

Thick white mist swirled all around us, the light dim and gray. I could see nothing beyond

her and this moment in time. She pulled me into her arms and embraced me, holding me close. I felt calm, at ease as she held me and hummed a tune, a lullaby, I felt I should recognize. It was a feeling of coming home. I lost all thought beyond the here and now and could no longer remember why I'd felt such a sense of urgency only a moment before.

"Annalise," she breathed my name on a sigh. "I've waited so long for this moment." Her voice was an eerie echo of my own. "You are all I dreamed you would be. And so much more." Smiling, she clasped both of my hands in hers and we pulled back from one another, each taking the other's measure. "You must hold onto my hands. Don't let go," she cautioned, studying me every bit as closely as I was studying her.

Resting on her forehead was a circlet in a jeweled design of sapphire and moonstone, the point hanging low between her brows. Her eyes were heavily lined in black. Inked swirls and arcane symbols were painted from the outer corner of each eye fanning down onto her cheekbones. There was more than a hint of danger in those shimmering blue eyes.

Her face was my own. And yet not.

A fitted, black leather corset hugged her upper body. Black leather leggings and tall black lace-up boots encased her legs up past the knees. She wore black leather braces from her wrists up to her bare elbows and a silver dagger hung at her belt of bejeweled moons and stars. Dozens of ravens on wing swept in and settled around us in the swirling mist. A silent audience to this meeting.

this occasion. Then again, I realize I don't have to imagine it. I'll be seeing it firsthand soon enough.

This portal isn't like the ones at the Ludares tournament. There's no stretching, no pain, no quick dive in or even faster roll out. There's nothing but a free fall through darkness that goes on and on and on.

I strain my ears, trying to orient myself. Trying to find Hudson or Flint in the middle of this never-ending blackness, but I can't. I'm completely isolated, completely alone, and it's as terrifying as it is disorienting.

A scream wells up inside me, and I reach out a hand, certain that if I can just find Hudson or Flint—if I can just touch one of them—it will make all this bearable. But I can't reach them, can't touch them. It's like they've vanished, and I really am all alone in this.

I don't know how long the portal takes—probably only a couple of minutes. But it's the longest couple of minutes of my life, and all I want is for it to end.

Until it does. The portal vomits me out in the middle of an obscenely bright room, the lights like giant needles being shoved into my eyes after the absolute darkness of the last few minutes. I'm disoriented, can barely see, and am more scared than I want to admit when I land on my knees with a hard *thud* that sends pain ricocheting through me.

My first instinct is to stay where I am until I can get my bearings, but it's not like they don't know where I am. Plus, being unable to see and on my knees makes me feel way too vulnerable—I'd rather be on my feet when I meet whatever comes next.

It turns out that whatever comes next is a woman in a severe black business suit and black sunglasses, her black hair tamed into a ruthlessly precise bun. She's standing a few feet from me, and though I can't see her eyes, the tilt of her head says she is very

“This place. Where are we?” I breathed in wonder. And I realized in that moment that she looked the way I had wanted to look at Halloween; that the costume I had envisioned was a vain attempt to capture her very image as I saw her now.

Her lips curved into a slight smile as she answered. “It is known by many names. Can you guess? You have walked here before.”

“I thought it was a dream,” I answered. “The Summer Country. Annwyn. Faery?”

She nodded at me and smiled as if I were her star pupil. “It is a sacred and most holy part of that land—an island within that realm. We call this place Avalon. Only those of our blood, Kindred blood, may walk here now, though it was not always so.” Pausing for a moment, she drew a breath and continued, “There was a time when the gates between the worlds drifted in the mists and were open to those who willed it so. According to prophecy, that time may come once again should you choose to accept your destiny.”

I shivered at her words, though I couldn’t say whether it was fear or wonder which gave me a chill. “Who-what are you?”

“I am a Morrigan.” She said it as if I should know what that meant, but I didn’t.

I shook my head, confused.

“Have they told you nothing of me, then?”

I gave her a blank look.

“I should have guessed as much,” she murmured. “Do you truly have no idea what a Morrigan is?”

I wasn’t sure whether I wanted to hazard a guess. I wanted this woman’s good opinion of me, for her to think I was intelligent, worthy. “Valkyrie?” I winced as I said the word.

Unexpectedly, she tipped her head back and laughed, a lovely, rich peal of laughter that called a smile to my own lips.

much watching me, like I’m an animal in a cage. **Though I guess that’s precisely what I am. Precisely what Cyrus has turned all three of us into.**

My instincts tell me to duck my head, not to look at her even as she studies me. But that feels too much like defeat to me—too much like giving up at a time when I’m going to have to fight harder than I ever have in my life. So I stare right back at her, the blankest look on my face that I can manage. After all, she’s going to do what she’s going to do. My refusing to cower isn’t going to change that.

I wish she’d take off the glasses, but something tells me they might be there for my protection, not hers. I can feel the magic in her, but I have no idea what she is—definitely not a vamp or any of the other paranormals I’m used to running into at Katmere Academy. But as I’m learning, there are a ton of other creatures in this world that I don’t know about yet, and she is definitely one of them.

“Welcome to the Aethereum, Miss Foster,” she hisses, her S’s extremely exaggerated as she walks around me in a circle that has the hair on the back of my neck standing straight up.

I turn with her, everything inside me screaming not to give this woman my back. The cold smile on her face tells me she’s amused by my reluctance, but all her body language shouts that she’s not going to put up with it for long.

Even before she says, “Turn around, please.” Again with the long S sound.

It takes every ounce of strength I have to do as she orders, but I manage it. Then nearly sob in relief as she loosens the punishing cuffs. At least until I feel two sharp pricks in my wrist.

I start to jerk my hand away, but she stops me.

“You belong to the prison now, Miss Foster. You do what I say and nothing else.”

“I’m not Odin’s handmaiden, though that is a worthy guess. A Morrigan priestess is called forth by the land in service to the Mother when there is great need. And there is such a need in order for the Prophecy to be fulfilled, for the balance to be restored. I walk here in Avalon in my true form. For now.” She gestured around her to the mist.

I turned and looked around me. The fog surrounding us was thick with presence, ebbing and flowing in swirls around our feet, caressing. Goose bumps broke out along the flesh of my arms and legs. Squinting, I saw figures in the distance. The mist broke and for a moment I glimpsed a multitude of women, numbering in the hundreds, standing in a ring around us, their faces masked in shadow.

I blinked and stared harder, trying to make sense of the scene. They were all dressed differently; many in white, gray or black hooded robes, others in diaphanous gowns of all colors and still others clad in primitive fur and skins. Something about them filled my being with a sense of awe and wonder.

Priestesses.

She squeezed my hands once and nodded. “The time of the Prophecy draws nigh. All will be made clear at your Initiation on your birthday, child. You are not yet seventeen.”

“Why am I here then?”

“It is your birthright to be here. And it is time for you to know that.” She nodded at the women in the mist. “We are at war, child, a war that has been waged since the beginning of time itself. In all of life there is light and dark. Good and evil. But there must be balance. It is nearly your time. Time to achieve your potential and come fully into your powers, Annalise.”

“I don’t understand. What’s happening to me? What am I supposed to do?” In my eagerness to know more, to finally have the mystery revealed, I clutched her hands too tightly.

“What did you do to me?” I ask, the sting in my wrist getting worse instead of better.

“Ensured that your powers belong to us now. Nothing more, nothing less.”

“What does that mean?” I demand even as I reach inside me to find my gargoyle. Not because I want to shift but because I need the reassurance. Need to know that she’s still there. Except she isn’t...I can’t even find the platinum string, let alone reach for it.

I quickly check for my other strings, and I’m a little dizzy as I find my mating bond string, still shimmery and beautiful. But my gargoyle string is...gone.

Panic races through me, and I want to scream at her, want to beg her to tell me what she’s done. But I already know that she won’t tell me—this is prison, after all, and she doesn’t have to tell me anything.

And that’s before I feel something cold encircle the same wrist she pricked, before I feel a snug metal bracelet snap into place. “You may turn back around now,” she says. “And follow me.”

"Peace, my child." She loosened my grip, gently patting my fingers. "Humankind has turned against nature, trying to conquer and tame that which cannot be tamed. Demons hold sway; corruption is rampant and the Earth and her creatures are in peril. It is time for the priestesses of Avalon to return." Her silvery, shimmering blue eyes burned with passion. "You have a role in this-a great destiny, daughter, should you so choose."

Exultant, I opened my mouth to speak but before I could say anything she pressed a cool finger to my lips. "Shh, darling one. Vows spoken here cannot be broken. You must wait until your birthday, until Initiation, and choose your path knowingly. Destiny may be written in the stars but there is always choice. Free will.

She pulled back, holding me at arm's length while she searched my face. "In spite of what others will tell you, whichever choice you make will be the right one for you. Remember that. May you always find shelter in the power of the moon, mo chroid, my heart." She came forward and pressed a kiss on my forehead, a final benediction, and made as if to turn away, loosening her grip on my hands once again.

"Wait! Don't go yet," I pleaded with her, gripping her arms, refusing to let her go. "Are you-Elise?" I asked, turning back to her. "Are we-are we related?" It was easier to ask that way rather than to claim her as my mother. There was no way I could give voice to that word. Not yet.

There was a heavy silence between us in which she didn't answer at all.

I had been wrong. I felt a pang of bitter disappointment followed by a rush of relief I didn't want to have the blood of this dangerously beautiful stranger running through my veins. I didn't yet understand what a Morrigan was but I felt certain

she was dangerous in a way that none of the beings I'd met so far could compare with.

She reached out with one hand and cupped my cheek in her palm. "Know that we are blood." She squeezed my hands. "You are my namesake, Annalise. Anna in honor of the Goddess. Lise for me. I chose this name for you."

"You named me?"

She nodded, a slight bowing of her head. "Of course. In honor of the Goddess, the Great Mother of us all. Inanna, Anu, Ana, Anna Perenna, Danaan, Dianna-all the same." She smiled a grim smile.

"I don't understand." I rubbed the space between my brows for a moment. "Julian said you were his wife and that you were made into a succubus-hundreds of years ago. He said my father took you away from him and that you're dead. My mother knew you too and didn't like you. None of this makes any sense." I shook my head, confused and more than a little upset. There were too many riddles and no answer in sight.

"My child. There are rules in this place. Rules that even I as High Priestess must follow. You will come to know the truth in time, when you are Initiated. That time is not now." Her face was sad. Seeing what I knew was a mulish look on my own face, she reached out and touched my cheek. "Peace, Annalise. I will tell you what little I can and it must be enough." Her eyes flashed silver in the strange light.

She drew a breath. "I was born and remain Kindred-Witch-Priestess. That is my birthright and that of my sisters, Marcheline and Brienne." She paused and waited for the words to sink in. "And your birthright as well."

I felt my eyes widen in surprise at her words.

She continued, "We three were raised here, on the holy Isle of Avalon and priestess trained, as was our mother before us.

As you should have been." An expression of remorse crossed her face.

"Julian was my husband and for a time I walked as a succubus-of sorts. We were so desperately in love that I was willing to risk the conversion. I had every reason to think I would

have the strength to survive it; I was young and strong-and we were so happy, joyous in our marriage.

"I was a child then and did not know what course my life would take. I did not know what I would become-what destiny I was meant to fulfill. And Julian-ah, in those days he was full of life, laughter and love. He was everything I could have hoped for in a mate. Devoted, kind-hearted, adventuresome, honest and so much more."

I shuddered in disgust.

She gave me a look. "You are repulsed? You should have known him then. He is not the same man I once knew and I fear I bear responsibility for his downfall. It is a burden I do not carry lightly." Her lips curved down in grief "Some loves are not meant to be, no matter how deeply we feel them. The course of a life is written in the stars and though we have free will to make choices, destiny and personal happiness do not always follow hand in hand. And that is especially so for a priestess, who may not make an alliance with any man. Our kind belong to the Goddess alone." Her eyes glistened with unshed tears.

"Julian's disgrace is my own. You see, Marcheline, as the eldest in our mother's line, could not-would not fulfill her sacred duty. She allowed herself to be bound to one man, your father, and would not agree to assume the mantle of High Priestess.

"There is always free will. A choice. My elder sister's choice was to deny the will of the Goddess. She would bear no children to raise in Avalon. As the second born, I heard the call and

accepted it when she could not and knew my time with my love was over. It was and is my destiny to walk this path in service to the Great Mother of us all.

"Not a day goes by that I don't miss him and my child, my daughter. This path I have been set is a lonely one and in order to serve as I am needed, I am called upon to sacrifice. Julian would not believe me when I told him what was needful. He could not accept it nor would Marcheline though she, too, knew what was needed. A terrible mistake was made and his mind snapped." She cast her gaze out into the mist, her expression pained. "Love can be a very dangerous emotion. It can inspire great passion and the best of deeds, but it can also inspire the worst. Julian is lost to me and to himself for however long he is left to draw breath. Be careful, my Annalise lest you make the same mistake."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"You have not heeded my warnings. Your young man, the Sentinel, may be your undoing. He cannot understand your purpose, child, and is bound to destroy you should he discover it."

I swallowed. She knew! She knew what I was and just how dangerous my relationship with Ash could be. Of course she did. "Warnings? Do you mean the dreams?"

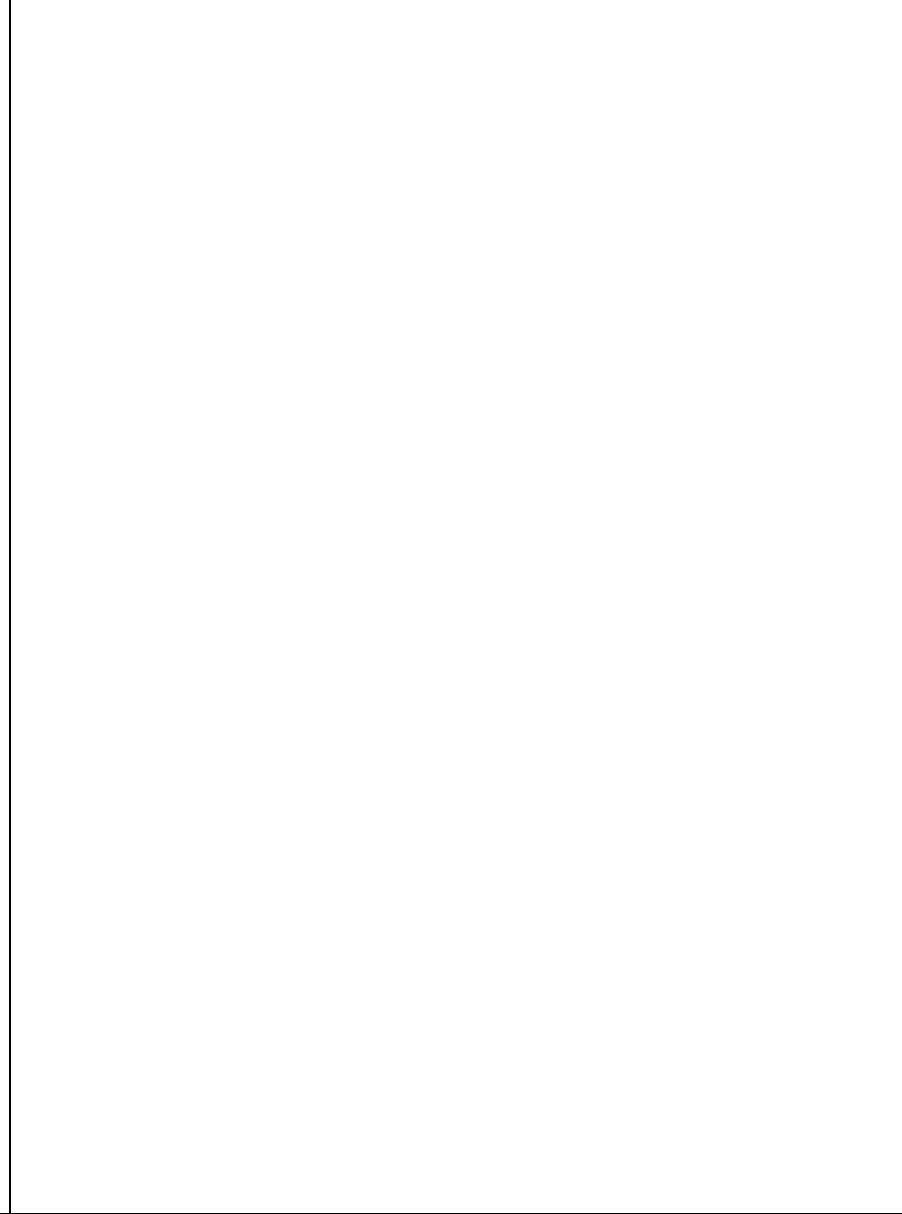
She nodded. "The ravens as well. They are my messengers and as such may pass freely between the realms where I cannot. You are in danger."

"You don't understand. We love each other. Ash would never hurt me."

"You trust him absolutely?"

I looked down to the swirling mist at our feet, uncertainty gnawing at my insides.

"That is your answer. Let us speak of your father. Dante." She breathed his name on a sigh.



"I have made it possible for you to be reunited in this place-in Annwyn. You have met him here many times, child. Do you remember?"

"I've met a wolf here. He told me his name was Athair Mo Chroid." I'd met another wolf,

Ronan, but I wasn't going to mention that. It was just a dream, after all.

She gave me a chiding look. "Annalise, darling one, Athair Mo Chroid isn't a name. It's a title."

"What does it mean?"

"It means 'father of my heart.' Now, do you know?" Her smile was gentle.

I gasped. I hadn't realized in all this time that my wise wolf was my dad! I had walked with him many times in the World of Dreams. If only I had known! My heart clutched inside my chest. "You-you said that I should come now, that I could save my dad. Is he here?" It was too much to hope for.

"He is close by. And the time is soon coming when you will be able to free him."

"Thank you for-well-for helping me but I need to find him now." I needed to see my dad. I needed it more than anything-to find him, to hear his voice again, to know that he was alive! Really alive! And I needed that to happen now, even though I had so many questions burning and sticking in my throat.

"Annalise, you can free your father but there are things you must learn first. I can teach you. Here in Avalon, after your Initiation."

"I'd like that. Almost more than anything but-I need to go. I need to find him."

Her eyes took on a faraway look. "There is a test which you must pass in order to make that so."

"Test?"

"In such matters, there is always a test." Her lips curved into the slightest smile. "You've heard the call, Annalise and you've answered it up until this point. On your birthday, it will be your choice whether or not to accept your destiny."

I shook my head in impatience. "I can't wait that long. I need to find him now. Please."

"Your transformation is not complete. How can you hope to pass this test without the skills and knowledge I can teach you?" Her eyes implored me to listen to her and take her advice. But I couldn't.

"I'm sorry. I need to try."

She inclined her head one time. "Perhaps this is part of your journey, child. Remember that and remember that the path you take will be the right one for you at this time."

She took a step forward with me and pointed to the mirror, which was humming once again. From this side, the dragons which framed the mirror appeared-alive! Their silver and gold bodies writhed around the frame head to head, tails entwined. Their brilliant, emerald green eyes were open, staring at me. I held my hand out to them and couldn't resist stroking their beautiful faces. Elise gave me an approving look.

"As a descendant of Melusine you are tied to the mirror and it to you. This one thing I can teach you now, before you leave. You have the power to summon the mirror to cross the realms.

You may bring those back with you to the other side who would not otherwise be able to leave this place. Now, I will lead you to your father and then the rest is up to you. Your choice, Annalise."

Still holding one of my hands, she patted my hair and then clasped my shoulder. "I know you do not understand what direction your path shall take you. In time you will. That, I promise. Know now that you are flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, blood of my blood. And so it falls to me to see you through

your Initiation, Daughter of the Moon-Daughter of the Prophecy. Daughter mine. For I, the High Priestess of Avalon, am your mother." Her eyes flashed silver so brightly that I turned away. Three loud claps of thunder sounded in the distance. "My vow is honored and accepted."

"Mother!" I cried out, my heart anguished for what I had been unwilling to accept.

She released my hands and I was suddenly pitched forward, falling out of space, out of time, into the nothingness **of the mist.**

"Mother!" My mouth formed the words though no sound escaped my lips. Falling, my

arms flailed wildly as I tried to regain a sense of place. Finally, after what felt like a very long time the air stilled; in slow-motion I landed with a solid thump on my knees, adrenaline coursing through my body. **I was alive, unhurt. Soft leaves and dirt cushioned my fall and I sat there for a moment, panting with exertion. I was in that place I so often walked in my dreams. In that forest. In Annwyn. I could see water lapping the shore from my vantage point and an island in the distance. Avalon.**

Elise was-my mother. I felt an electric thrill dance through my veins at the thought. She was powerful; the High Priestess of Avalon. She would be there at my Initiation-whatever that meant-and I knew she would help me in ways that no one else could. Or would.

I wanted to be with her, my mother. To know her. To have her love me and claim me as her own. I wanted her to look at me with pride and acceptance in her eyes-something that Marcheline had never done. Would probably never do. I wanted to be all that my mother wanted in a daughter. And I wanted her to be everything that I had missed in a mother.

Julian had been telling the truth after all. Marcheline and my Aunt Brienne had lied for the whole of my life. My senses

were reeling such that I couldn't tell whether I wanted to cry, scream or laugh. Part of the mystery that had been my life for so long was resolved at last. And I understood.

The fact that I had a hard time calling Marcheline "Mom," made sense. It was as though a part of me had always known she wasn't my mother. The way that she looked at me sometimes, almost as if she hated me, made sense too, since she hated Elise. And I was Elise's daughter. Her namesake. Why she and my Aunt Brie would lie to me about it remained a mystery. There was a story there as to how Elise came to be in Avalon and why Marcheline hated her so-another secret to unravel.

The answers lay with my dad. He was the one person I knew I could count on to be truthful. My relationship with him had always been open and easy. He had always approved of me no matter what and had told me I could do anything. I needed him now. I needed him more than ever. And now was my chance to find him at last!

I took in the smell of the pine and the soft sounds of the woods around me. It was nightfall. There was no sign of anyone, only the darkness surrounding me and the pale light of the full moon above. Heart pumping, I leapt to my feet and scanned the trees in front of me-tall and leafy oak, birch, willow, pine and yew, all in full bloom as though it was high summer. I noticed twinkling candle lights were strewn through the branches and in the air all around were-fireflies?

Swallowing the urge to panic, for the lights hadn't been there just a few moments ago, I took a cautious step forward, the sound of twigs snapping underfoot. A loud flutter of wings caught me off-guard as a huge raven, easily twice the size of any normal raven, settled itself on the ground ahead of me. A messenger from Elise-my mother.

"Come, come!" its terrible voice screeched. It hopped down the path and shook its wings, motioning me forward. Its eyes glittered with a fierce intelligence and in its gaze I felt the presence of something beyond my experience. This was no ordinary raven. It never had been.

My heart pulsed with fear and anticipation. **Breathing several slow, deep breaths, concentrating on the exhale, my reaction subsided. This bird and I knew one another.**

"Come on!" it seemed to shriek in that inhuman voice. **"Come on!"**

"All right, all right," I grumbled. "I'll follow. **But you'd better not be playing a dirty trick or so help me, I'll-**" I floundered. **What would I do? I grabbed a thick branch from the forest floor and stalked forward, slowly, menace in my step as I shook the branch in front of me at the bird.**

"Ha ha ha!" it laughed.

A shiver raced down my spine as I followed its mincing steps. It flew a few feet and landed, each time waiting for me to catch up and then scolding me.

The forest around us opened to a clearing. **The fullness of the moon bathed the glade and the trees in a warm golden glow, almost as if the forest were lit with lantern light.**

Freeman Ex. 14 p. 362:

Ash reached across my lap and grabbed my safety belt, buckling me in. As his hand passed in front of me, something sparkly caught the light. I reached out and took his hand to get a better look. He was wearing rings of silver, gold and black on his index, middle and third fingers. I squinted. Not rings. Tattoos! And they were moving on his fingers, swirling in a strange dance.

Freeman Ex. 16 p. 329:

Dark blood calls to dark blood and I can smell the demon in you.

Covet p. 605:

Remy's exists only in my arm—captured by the tattoo that's so bright now, it's practically blinding as it swirls and dances up and down my biceps and forearm.

Covet p. 229:

"Yes, I definitely smell the gargoyle in you, but..."

<p>Freeman Ex. 17 p. 238: You're immune. And you shouldn't be." He looks at me curiously. Why would I be immune when my mother and aunt aren't?</p>	<p>Covet p. 560: Maybe you're, I don't know, immune," he tells him. "Why would I be immune?"</p>
<p>Freeman Ex. 30 p. 437 He reached out and with his thumb and forefinger tilted my chin up, forcing my gaze to meet his.</p>	<p>Court p. 593: Hudson reaches out and tilts my chin up with his finger, until he's holding my gaze in his fathomless blue depths.</p>